

'Blue Suede Shoes'

OPAS brings Elvis sounds to A&M students at Rudder

By APRIL TOWERY
Staff writer

Elvis himself might have been in Rudder Auditorium Tuesday, March 31, opening night of the OPAS production "Blue Suede Shoes."

This isn't men in tights. It isn't "Swan Lake." Eight performances of the Cleveland San Jose Ballet's "Blue Suede Shoes" are being held through April 5 at Rudder Auditorium, and thus far, the show has kept audiences rocking.

The performance opens to a psychedelic guitar and original Elvis music. The audience was in almost constant applause throughout the opening performance.

And there's even a little humor in the show. It contains six acts, "High School," "Hot Dog Drive-In," "In the Army," "Highways and Lonely Hearts," "Saturday Night" and "Jailhouse." Each set is beautifully crafted. The brightly-colored costumes are a sight to behold.

Set and costume designer Bob Mackie joins direction and choreography by Dennis Nahat in the production. Mackie has received three Academy Award nominations, 10 Emmy nominations and six Emmy Awards. He designed jewelry and clothing for celebrities, such as Cher, Madonna, RuPaul and Diana Ross.

Backstage after a performance of "Blue Suede Shoes" in Los Angeles, Calif., in July, members of the media were shown the sets and costumes up close. One of the impressive aspects of the costume design was one particular flared polka-dot skirt. Mackie reportedly liked the skirt but was displeased with the color of some of the polka dots.

Upon looking closely at the skirt, it was evident that every dot of a certain color had been sewn over with a dot of another shade. Each costume may not have been designed so meticulously, but this is an example of the detail that went into each aspect of design.

"It's the latest one I've outdone myself on," Mackie said of "Blue Suede Shoes." "I intend to keep outdoing myself."

Throughout many ballets, some audience members are counting the minutes till inter-



Ramon Thielen, Raymond Rodriguez and Matthew Gasper dance to "Guitar Man" in the Blue Suede Shoes "High School" scene.

mission — not this one. Nahat, the co-founder of the School of Cleveland Ballet, has choreographed more than 90 original works. His work in "Blue Suede Shoes" is unsurpassed. Recently, it was taped for PBS television and aired nationwide this month.

Produced by David Oakland, president of a division of Cleveland Ballet, the show targets audience members of all ages and backgrounds.

"The sound bite for the college kids is that we're taking something boring and shaking it up," Oakland said at a press conference in July.

What makes this ballet unique is that it is something like *Footloose* meets "The Nutcracker."

The music is all Elvis originals but includes a few tunes college students may have not heard before. But of course, the production includes the classic Elvis songs "Let Me Be Your Teddy Bear," "Love Me Tender," "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Jailhouse Rock."

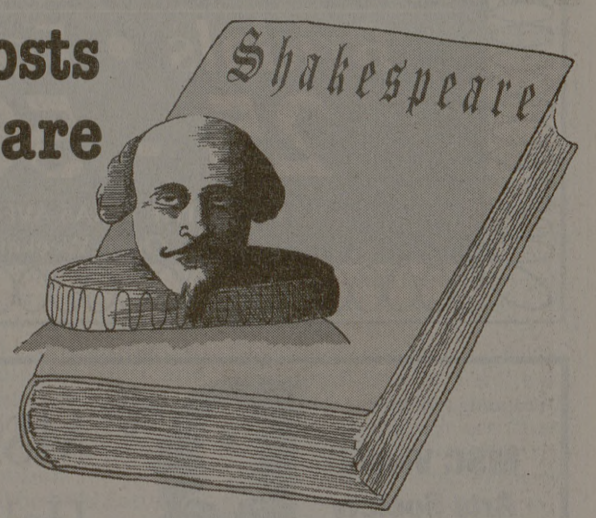
The grand finale of the production is a show in itself, including the instrumental tunes "Hound Dog," "Shake Rattle and Roll" and "Blue Suede Shoes."

Before "Blue Suede Shoes" is the 20-minute "Quicksilver" ballet, set to the music of Felix Mendelssohn. This production is also choreographed by Nahat and performed by the Cleveland Ballet.

PLEASE SEE SHOES ON PAGE 6.

MSC Literary Arts hosts week of Shakespeare

By STEPHEN WELLS
Staff writer



Most Texas A&M students remember Shakespeare as the guy who wrote the plays they had to read aloud in a monotone voice in high school English, pitying the one person in class who overacted their part and could not pronounce the word "arts'd." Now, the MSC Literary Arts committee is presenting its first Shakespeare Festival and breathing new life into Victorian drama by presenting it the way it was meant to be presented.

The Shakespeare Festival is a collection of lectures, stage readings and behind-the-scenes information about the works of Shakespeare. The festival will end on Saturday, April 4.

Peggy Philpot, the staff advisor for the MSC Literary Arts committee, said the Shakespeare Festival is a good idea that came to fruition through a great deal of hard work.

"We started out with just ideas," Philpot said. "Since we are a literary arts committee, it fit into our mission to hold a Shakespeare festival. Since we obviously couldn't do the whole thing ourselves — we provide lectures, not performances — we approached the Aggie Players and some other groups, and they just filled in the blanks from there."

Even with the help of the community, student groups and guest lecturers, this week's activities took a long time to plan.

"It's been in the process for a while," Philpot said. "This is an idea we've had for two years, and last year we just decided we'd try it. We've been planning it since then."

Unlike most Shakespeare events, the MSC Literary Arts festival is not just a showing of his work. Events range from readings of Shakespeare's work to parodies of his plays to lectures on the theory that Shakespeare is given credit for work he did not do.

PLEASE SEE SHAKESPEARE ON PAGE 5.

Chilifest '98 cooks April 4

By LEN CALLAWAY
Staff writer



Each year sororities and fraternities sponsor many special events to help support national and local charities.

This weekend the Texas A&M Chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon will host their 8th annual Chilifest at the Starlight Ballroom in Snook.

The all-day concert and "beer for all" (all those over 21, anyway) will benefit the Still Creek Boys Ranch, which helps provide a positive outlook and example in the lives of young men that lack a sense of family or responsibility.

The ranch has its own school and provides each child with an animal to raise and care for in hopes

of providing a deeper sense of responsibility. As a matter of fact, the students take the animals to livestock shows and the ranch has received so much recognition for its efforts, that it has recently added a girls' facility to its list of positive and beneficial amenities aimed at helping disadvantaged youth.

That is where SAE and Chilifest become involved.

Last month I was invited to speak with SAE philanthropy co-chairs Cody Durham and Gabe Stansberry. I was asked to meet them for a longer interview at a quaint little place in Snook called "the Watering Hole."

As I pulled up I noticed the sign over the door that read "Cold Beer, Free Advice." The best ad-

vice I got all night was "take a good look at Chilifest, it's different, it's special, these guys are doing something unique."

SAE Chilifest at A&M started eight years ago in the Wal-Mart parking lot, then took a big leap to the Albertson's parking lot. Eventually it made it to Snook and has been there for the past several years.

PLEASE SEE CHILI ON PAGE 5.

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Qualifications for editor-in-chief of *The Battalion* are:

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- Have at least one year experience in a responsible editorial position on *The Battalion* or comparable student newspaper,
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- Have completed or be registered in JOUR 210 (Graphics) or equivalent.

Application forms should be picked up and returned to Francia Cagle in the Student Publications Manager's office, room 012 Reed McDonald Building. Deadline for submitting application: 9 a.m. Tuesday, April 7, 1998. Applicants will be interviewed during the Student Publications Board Meeting beginning at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 8, 1998, in room 221F Reed McDonald Building.

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